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THE THREE HOURS' AGONY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

THE THREE HOURS' AGONY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

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JOHN J. WYNNE, S.J.

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THE
THREE HOURS' AGONY
OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

GIVEN AT THE CHURCH OF
OUR LADY OF LOURDES, NEW YORK
GOOD FRIDAY, 1916

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TO

Charles Philip Henry

PREFACE

VERY few words are needed to preface the publication of these sermons. Persuaded by friends that they would be welcome not only to those who heard them at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, New York City, on Good Friday, 1916, but also to that larger audience of devout souls who gather year by year around the Cross on that sorrowful day, the author now prints them in the hope that they will be of benefit to all who read them.

The Good Friday Devotion, popularly known as the Three Hours' Agony, is becoming one of the most eagerly attended services of Holy Week. It consists of parts of the Psalms, hymns, and prayers, with nine discourses—an introductory sermon, seven sermons on the Seven Last Words, and a concluding sermon. The usual method followed in this country is that contained in the booklet: "Good Friday: The Three Hours' Agony," published by the Cathedral Library Association, of New York. Those who wish to learn the history of the origin and development of this popular method of recalling the Crucifixion

and Death of Our Blessed Lord will find an excellent introduction to the subject, together with a list of books on the same, in the English edition of Father Messia's work, recently issued by the eminent historian, Father Herbert Thurston, S.J.

No other series of sermons could be of a more intimate and personal character than those given during this impressive service of the Three Hours' Agony. *Cor ad cor loquitur*, and the century-long traditions of the occasion itself open the heart wider than ever before. At no other moment does the sense of sin seem so intense, the fear of it so tangible; and the personal realization of the meaning of Calvary's tragedy reaches a depth seldom touched before or after Good Friday itself. This fact alone would seem to preclude any publicity to the words spoken at the very height of such emotion; but in spite of this hesitation, the sermons are now published, as they were given, as an humble act of devotion to the Crucified Master.

I thank my very dear friend, the Rev. Edward A. Pace, D.D., for many helpful suggestions and for correcting the proofs of these sermons.

PETER GUILDAY.

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA,
WASHINGTON, D. C.,
January 6, 1917

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PRAYER

ON THE SEVEN WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS

BLESSED be the Sweet Name of Jesus Christ our Lord God, and of the Most Sweet Virgin Mary, His Mother, now and for ever. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, who while hanging on the Cross, at Thy life's close, spake seven words, that we might always have those holy words in remembrance, I beseech Thee, by the virtue of those seven words, that Thou wouldst forgive and spare me, whatever I have sinned and misdone by the seven deadly sins, or their fruits, namely, through pride, avarice, lust, envy, anger, gluttony, and sloth.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, as Thou saidest "Father, forgive those who crucify Me," make me for love of Thee to forgive all who wrong me. And as Thou saidest to Thy Mother, "Woman, behold thy son," and to Thy disciple, "Behold thy Mother," make Thy love and true charity unite me to Thy Mother. And as Thou saidest to the thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," make me so to live that at the hour of death Thou mayest say to me, "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise," And as Thou saidest, "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabacthani,"

which is, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" make me to say in all times of sorrow and tribulation, "O Lord, my Father, have mercy on me a sinner, rule me, my King and my God, who hast redeemed me with Thine own Blood." And as Thou saidest, "I thirst," that is, for the salvation of the Holy Souls, who were in Limbo expecting Thy coming, make me always to thirst to love Thee, the fountain of living water, the fountain of eternal light, and to desire Thee with my whole heart. And as Thou saidest, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit," make me in my last hour, to be able to say fully and freely, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Receive me coming to Thee, because Thou hast now set a certain time to my life." And as Thou saidest, "It is finished," which signifies that the sorrows Thou didst bear for us miserable sinners are now ended, make me deserve, when my soul goes hence, to hear that most sweet word of Thine, "Come, my beloved soul, for now have I resolved to make an end of thy pains; come, and with Me, and with My saints and elect, enter into My Kingdom, to feast, and rejoice, and dwell therein for ever and evermore." Amen.

(*Attributed to the Venerable Bede.*)

INTRODUCTORY

"With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved me. —Zach. xiii. 6.

It was a day of crime in Jerusalem. The streets leading from the Holy City to Calvary were choked with a surging, excited mass of men, women, and children. The most tragic scene in the drama of the world's history was about to be accomplished. God's chosen people were on their way to crucify God's only begotten Son. Feverishly, hurriedly, at the head of the insolent, threatening crowd, the Roman soldiers urged the Innocent Victim of man's hatred on to Golgotha. A long, rough road—a road blessed since that day by the holy veneration of every Christian heart, opened up menacingly before the eyes of the Lamb of God. Along that sorrowful way, Jesus was dragging the heavy badge of infamy, the Cross of malediction. The cruel weary night of Holy Thursday was over. His Sacred Body, torn and bruised by the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, bathed in blood which trickled down from the wounds made by the crown of thorns, and lacerated by the awful scourging,

was now swaying beneath the leaden load of the Cross. As the procession passed through the Gate of Judgment, His strength fled from Him and He fell on His face exhausted. The Cyrenean and his sons were entering the city at that moment, and they were ordered to carry the Cross to Calvary's hill. There was no word of pity for Jesus, no sign of sympathy. Only five days before, and many in that cruel throng had accompanied Him from Bethlehem with shouted hosannas and palm branches of victory in their hands, proclaiming Him the Royal Son of David and blessed forever as one who came to them in the name of the Lord. And now He went on alone—betrayed by one Apostle, denied by another, forsaken by the rest. He passed along alone in the midst of cries for His death, and only the hearts of a few women had the courage to feel pity for the Man of Sorrows. A little love Jerusalem seemed to have left, and the group of women who were following close to Jesus lifted up their voices in lamentation, wailing and beating their breasts. Even this sympathy Jesus denied Himself. He turned towards them, saying: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." One woman, a friend of our Blessed Lady and very

dear to her, with more courage than the rest, pushed past the crowd following Him, past the soldiers who surrounded Him, and presented a cloth to wipe the blood from His face. Our Blessed Lord answers not a word at this touching mark of charity, but tears spring from His sacred eyes, and lo! on the linen cloth His image is printed and Veronica remains forever in Christian tradition as the model of heroic strength and courage. Calvary was reached at last. The cries of the multitude ceased and all eyes were turned towards the little group that stood on its hill. Jesus was about to die the most heart-rending death ever known to humanity. Pity now seems to have reached the heart of the crowd at last. A draught of wine mingled with myrrh had been prepared by some wealthy women of Jerusalem in order to lessen the pangs of His crucifixion. The two malefactors, who were to die with Him, drank freely of it; but when it was offered to Jesus, in a sublime act of heroism He refused it. He looked death in the face, fearless and unafraid. His Sacred Heart was determined to offer His Eternal Father every possible reparation for the sins of the world. God's justice would be redeemed to the last farthing.

The three crosses were now laid on the ground.

That of Jesus was in the middle. He was seized roughly by the soldiers, stripped of His garments, and placed upon the implement of torture. His arms were stretched along the cross beams, and into the centre of those Divine Hands, long, rough nails were driven up to the hilt. Then through both feet, nails were also plunged, tearing their way through the quivering flesh. At the sight of this inconceivable horror, the crowd broke away from the soldiers and stood aghast at the fearful spectacle. And then the accursed tree—with its living human burden hanging upon it in helpless agony, and suffering fresh torture with every movement—was slowly lifted up with strong arms and fixed firmly into the hole prepared for it. As the Cross fell into place, it seemed as if the body of Jesus would be wrenched from the nails. The Cross swayed for a moment or two, and then the long bitter agony of the three last hours of His life had begun.

They had dug His hands and feet, they had numbered all His bones,—as the Royal Psalmist had predicted. Between heaven and earth He hung there. Every hand that wished could strike; every insult, every word of hatred could reach Him. Thronging about the foot of the Cross, the motley crowd of soldiers, and officials, and

Jews from every quarter of Judea, passed and repassed ready to abuse, to outrage, to torture even, the Divine Victim of Love. Pharisees and Herodians, Priests and Levites, young men and old men, women and children, gathered near to watch the crucifixion and death of the Lord. The soldiers played at dice, sitting apart where they could keep watch. The whole scene meant nothing to them. They were Romans of Rome, of a race which had never known the finer instincts of manly tenderness; and as they watched, the scene grew in brutality and horror. It was a tragedy of the wildest tumult. All the powers of evil seem to have entered into the souls of the Jews and were buffeting and breaking themselves against the wood of the Cross as the angry sea lashes itself to death against the immovable rocks of the shore. Foremost amongst them, their leaders spent themselves in mocking the Son of God. The crowd grew bolder, and cries of derision went up to that dying heart, cries of mockery for His apparent inability to save Himself. Wagging their heads in contempt, they blasphemed Him: "Vah! thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days buildest it up again, save thy own self: if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross!" Unmoved by the sight of

His helpless anguish, they continued their taunting invectives, and in the midst of His speechless agony, they fling up to Him the heartless words: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross, you saved others, yourself you cannot save. If you are the King of Israel come down now from the cross, and we will believe in you!" All about Him the spirit of hatred whirled as if lashed into passion by the winds of scorn and contumely. The soldiers too caught the malign spirit of the moment, and the two thieves also joined in deriding Him. The hideous infection seemed to spread from Calvary's hill and to cover the whole world. The Cross of Christ, as the centre of that world, like the tree of life, of knowledge, and of good and evil in Paradise, felt every gust of passion, every wild hurricane of sin from Adam's day down to our own. But in the midst of all this chorus of infamy, Jesus was silent. Throughout the whole of the procession from Pilate's house to Golgotha, only once had He broken His royal silence; and now, nailed to the Cross, nothing was more eloquent with the proof of His Divinity than that silence, which mystified as well as terrified all on Calvary. Seven times Christ opened His lips to speak as He hung there, and every time a terrorizing wave of fear swept over the multitude

who were watching Him die. All over Calvary there was an undertone of fearful dread. At any moment this miracle-worker might open the heavens and let loose the legions of angels of God as He once threatened to do, and might take flaming vengeance upon His enemies. Almighty God had declared more than once that He would not always suffer patiently and leave His enemies go unpunished. But Jesus had willed to die unavenged. From the four wounds as from the four rivers of Paradise, His blood began to flow over the world, purifying it and burning up all the evil which existed therein.

Every act of Jesus in these last three hours of His life is full of significance for the Christian heart. He has passed from insult to insult, from torture to torture. He has seen Himself betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, forsaken by the other Apostles and Disciples. He has been the Victim of the envy of the high-priests, of the mockery of Herod, of the weakness of Pilate. He hangs there exhausted, dying from the long stretch of the physical and mental agony He has undergone. And yet never was He more divine than during these last hours of His earthly life. Before the eyes of His Eternal Father, the ignominious wood of the Cross was slowly changing

into an altar. The shame with which they had covered Him was turning into glory; and the very tablet they had nailed to the Cross in mockery and derision, proclaimed loudly to the world from that day to this, that: This is Jesus, the Immortal Son of God. This is the God-man who came to redeem the world. This is the Master whose last words we are to meditate again this sorrowful afternoon.

The seven words of the blessed dying Christ passed unheeded and misunderstood over the throng on Calvary; but there are hearts filled with faith, eyes filled with tears, and souls burdened with sorrow kneeling around a million Calvaries to-day. Christ Jesus looked in vain for one that would grieve together with Him and for one that would comfort Him, and found none. Gall and vinegar, insult and outrage they gave Him that terrible day of the first Good Friday. To-day from one end of His Father's world to the other, His children are kneeling at the foot of the Cross, begging Him to open their eyes, to illumine their understanding, to soften their hearts with the fire of love, that they may feel in themselves those cruel pains and that unspeakable suffering.

Remember, Lord Jesus, what Thou hast prom-

ised—that when Thou shouldst be crucified and raised up from the earth, thou wouldst draw all things unto Thee. By reason of our sins we are less than nothing, yet we are Thy creatures and the work of Thy hands. Draw all to Thee, this day, O Lord. Let not us be excluded. Take us up to Thee, and unite our hearts with Thine. Change us wholly into Thee. Grant us, O Lord of our souls, that Thou alone mayest reign and live in us, that we may live in Thee crucified. Never quit our hearts an instant during these hours while we meditate Thy passion with Mary Thy Mother, with John, with Magdalene and the others. Never leave our sight, our desires, our love. Let all else pass away from us. Do Thou alone remain with us, O crucified Jesus, the love of our souls, Jesus the way, the truth, and the light, Jesus our only good, our whole treasure, our entire blessedness. Silence all the troubles and cares that clamor within our hearts. Speak Thou alone to us, our glory, our hope, our crucified and only true friend, Jesus.

FIRST WORD

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."—Luke xxiii. 34.

It had taken many hands and the combined will of many wicked hearts to crucify the Omnipotent God of heaven and earth. It had taken four thousand years of sin and crime and sorrowing shame to raise that Cross on Calvary's mount. As He hung there between two thieves, the Victim of it all, He could see in the soldiers and menials who had fashioned that Cross and had welded those nails and hammers, brothers and sisters of yours and mine in the flesh. As in God the Father's mind, so in the mind of God the Son, all things—past, present, and future—were as one at the terrible moment of His death. And your sins and my sins, the sins of us all, brothers and sisters of His murderers, murdered Him just as truly as if we had been the Roman soldiers and the rabble that day. If He suffered more than seemed necessary, if He lingered full three hours in unspeakable agony, it was because we have so often knowingly and wilfully violated the divine laws of His Eternal Father. As He

looked down upon the soldiers throwing dice for His garments, He saw us, flinging away the blessed graces which are sent to bring us back again to Him. As He heard the taunts and the words of scorn from the Jews, He saw and heard voices in our own hearts which have so often spoken treason against Him and against His teaching. And yet, despite the foreknowledge of our cowardice in not carrying our cross as heroically as He carried His; despite the fact that He foresaw in the year which begins to-day for all of us, that many of us will blacken our souls anew with sin, what were His sublime words —almost the sublimest He ever uttered—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Was it not enough, Blessed Jesus, to prove Thy Divinity by the sun hiding its face and by the veil of darkness which begins now to fall over the world? The trembling, palsied earth, the rocks splitting asunder, the opening graves, and the dead rousing themselves to life again—were these not enough to make us remember for all eternity that our God was dying on the Cross for us? Was it not enough that the seas should be swept into violence, that the wild crying winds of the hurricane, hurrying down from Libanus, should lash themselves to every

corner of the world, terrifying the sinful heart of man? Was it not enough that the angels in heaven, horror-stricken at His agony, should hurl themselves against the gates of Heaven, begging and pleading to be allowed to smite mankind with death and annihilation? Was it not enough that the lightnings of God should vent their celestial anger through the clouds that were fleeing from all quarters of the globe to hide this heart-rending scene—was all this not enough, O God, to make us tremble like bondmen, tremble like the centurion, and cry out: "Verily this is the Son of God!" No, it was not enough. The thunder might reverberate. Deep blazing wreaths of lightning might glare their maddened way from heaven to earth. Mighty winds might arise from the dust of centuries. Blasts from the clouds might leap forth, and the firmament become embroiled with the deep. But the stern voice of necessity needed a more striking proof, a final one, to tell us, criminals and sinners that we are, to tell us to the end of all time that we are being redeemed by the Omnipotent God Himself.

The rising sun of splendor on Easter morn will calm the angry outbursts of nature, and something more was needed to immortalize in our hearts God's love and pity for us. When the

voice of Jesus broke the silence for the first time about Him, when those lips recommended to His Eternal Father those who were crucifying Him, when His fast-breaking heart cloaked their sins with His forgiveness, and in a generosity as deep and profound as the sea, attributed it to an unholy ignorance—then, O God, did Jesus perform the greatest miracle this world has ever seen. My God, we are like little children here, in the presence of this outmercying of mercy, like little children babbling of things we can never fully comprehend; we are like weak swimmers carried by the swift tide of the love of Jesus out beyond our depth—only Thy grace can illumine our hearts with the profound mystery of this great pardon. It is all so different, dear God, from what the world has taught us since our childhood—this spirit of forgiveness. Teach us to understand Thy Son in this sublime hour. He complains not of the thorns which torture Him. He murmurs not at the nails which transfix Him to the wood of the Cross. He speaks not of the fever which burns in His body from head to foot. He mourns not at the insults which outrage His Divinity. He sorrows not over the bitter base ingratitude of the Jews—no! His heart weeps poignantly, because in crucifying Him that day, in sinning

as men and women have done ever since, they offend His heavenly Father; because they were losing their souls, souls He was dying on the Cross to redeem. This was the greatest anguish of all; and when He speaks, it is in accents of the tenderest pleading: "Father, if you love me, as you have loved me from all eternity, pardon these who are crucifying me. Revenge not yourself upon them or upon their children, pardon them for their ignorance, forgive them, for they know not what they do. I have taught the world the lesson of Your love for men; look out over them all, let them draw near to hear the word of forgiveness, so that from the Cross as from a fountain pardon may flow to the uttermost bounds of the earth!"

Forgiveness for His enemies, forgiveness for all the enemies of God—this was the first word of Jesus dying on the Cross. Forgiveness!—and it abrogated the old law of retaliation, the old law of revenge, it brought into the world the new law of Christ's love for us and our love for our fellowmen. Christ Jesus on Calvary's hill had not said, as Elias the great prophet had said on the top of a hill in Judea: "If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume these my enemies." Jesus Christ had not

inflicted on His executioners the dire punishment which followed so promptly on the thoughtless words of the children who insulted His servant Eliseus. No, over all Calvary spreads the white robe of forgiveness. He would, as it were, hide the sins of the world from the eyes of God the Father. He appealed to Him not as Lord, God, Creator, or Prophet, but as Father, our Father in Heaven, the merciful Father of the human race—"Father, I have forgiven them all, do Thou also forgive them! In the blindness of their hearts they know not what they do. If they knew Thee, as I know Thee, knew Thy majesty, Thy justice, Thy power, sin would never enter their hearts—forgive them, all these Thy children, spare them from Thy wrath for a better day." Had our Blessed Lord prayed for His Mother Mary, for His Apostles and Disciples, or for the infant church—even this would have touched us, that in the midst of His passion He could still think of them. But it was not for them, but for us sinners that He prayed—prayed not only for our forgiveness by God, but to teach us the hardest lesson this world contains—that we should forgive those who trespass against us as freely as we have been forgiven by Him.

Against the blackening sky of Judea that altar

of love, of sacrifice, and of death, rested alone. There it stood, a symbol of love, an altar we were to approach, with hearts filled with love for our brethren in the world. On it our Brother has been crucified for our ransom, and He hangs there waiting for us to approach with the gift of our loving hearts. As we mount Calvary's hill, a voice comes to us from out His public teaching—"if therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar and there remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first and be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift."

Christ Jesus, it is hard to forgive. There is scarcely a soul here to-day gazing up to Thee into whose heart the iron of bitterness has not entered. We have all passed through this crucible of suffering. Persecutions have followed us from our mother's knee. We have been led into dangers by false friends; we have been wounded in hands that gave generously, wounded in feet that hurried to carry consolation; we have been bruised in hearts that sought comfort in the quicksands of friendship, and all around us have eddied and flowed fierce, harsh struggles in this probation-house we call Life. There have been

lies, dear Jesus, calumnies, suspicions, wrongs and treacheries all through the years, and our hearts are hardening like stone. Victims we have been of evils innumerable, and our souls are stored with ugly remembrances of bitter things done and said, and it is so hard to forgive, so hard to forget. But Thy heroic example, Lord Jesus, hath renewed the face of our souls, like the purifying fires of a Pentecost. Thou hast taught us in this first word from the cross the Law of Pardon. Gentlest of brothers, dearest of friends and tenderest of hearts, bring our hearts up to Thine on the Cross, and make us strong with the strength that is never cruel, soft and tender with a sympathy that knows no borderland; and teach us to pray for all those who have injured us, to forgive them all with the same generosity which said: "They know not what they do." Good Jesus, then shall we sing the song of Thy victory over the world and death.—Give us a love like Thine, a love for our fellowmen which will rally us with the loving, lightsome hearts of children and the strong arms of men to the banner of our crucified Leader, whose standard is the Cross, whose Cross is love, and whose love is the pledge of victory to all who labor in obedience and gentleness as true children of the Kingdom of God.

SECOND WORD

"Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."—Luke xxiii. 43.

THERE is a story they used to tell to the children in ages long gone by that, when Mary and Joseph fled with Jesus into Egypt, they took refuge one night in a cave of robbers.

The Blessed Mother had finished washing her Infant Son and was wrapping Him in His swaddling clothes again, when the mother of a baby the same age of Jesus, the wife of one of the robbers, attracted by the heavenly light which surrounded the Holy Family, begged to wash her baby in the same water, for he was born a leper. Our Blessed Lady graciously gave her the permission; and when the robber's wife had finished, her little boy was cleansed of his leprosy and was made as white as snow. He grew up and joined the robber band and one day was caught by the officers of the law, and was condemned to be crucified with a certain man from Nazareth, who had worked wondrous miracles and who called Himself the Son of God. The robber too was dying on a cross, dying for his crimes, dying in

the sight of the Innocent Lamb of God, and his life day by day from that night in Egypt up to this supreme moment in the history of the world passed before his eyes. Snatches of rumors that he had heard of the wonder-worker of Israel came back to him. Half-broken memories of a girl raised to life, of a young man restored to his mother, of the resurrection of a man named Lazarus, clamor about his heart seeking entrance. Old remembrances are being revived—remembrances of this holy Man's great love for sinners—remembrances of a Kingdom where sin was no more, where sorrow and punishment and death were no more, where peace and joy reigned in eternity—remembrances of the words which had sped from one end of Judea to the other when Jesus had publicly pardoned the Magdalene. Light broke over the soul of the thief at last; and as they hung there together on Calvary, he and Jesus, the thief recognized in Mary, at the foot of the Cross, the woman his mother had described to him in telling him the story of that wondrous night in Egypt thirty years before. As he looked upon Jesus, and as the eyes of the divine Son of God sought his and rested in infinite patience for the light of grace to glow in his soul, he saw that the Man-God at his side was dying for all

the crimes he and sinners like him had committed. He saw represented in himself the whole sinful world, which had heaped its ignominious burden of guilt upon the Man of Sorrows, and that Jesus Christ was dying to ransom the whole world of sin and shame. Such grandeur of soul, such generosity, such a sacrifice he had never dreamed of. His heart had stood still with the astounding wonder of it all, when Christ had whispered those healing words of pardon: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and turning to Jesus with eyes suffused with tears of repentance, he uttered those words which saved his soul and gave to us the strongest rock of confidence in our own trials: "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom. Lord Jesus, I have sinned. The commandments of Jehovah were as clay in my hands. The world is filled and always will be filled with sinful men like me. Death, punishment and hell are our portion, for we deserve them all. But Thou hast done no evil. Thou art dying for love of me, a sinner. Thou—Jesus—Christ the Anointed—Son of Mary—God of all—Saviour—is there any hope for me?" And Jesus, as He paused in reply, remembered all that He had taught the world in those three years of public life. He heard again

the words He had said to the man sick with the palsy: "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee." He saw again through the blood and tears which blinded Him, the scene in the house of Simon, when Mary Magdalene, the most notorious of all the sinners of Jerusalem, knelt at His feet and washed them with her tears, and He remembered again how He had turned to her in Divine tenderness and said to her: "Thy sins are forgiven thee, . . . go in peace." He knew that after His resurrection, He was to confer that power upon His Apostles and Disciples, when He would say to them: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." All this flashed through His mind in a moment, as the good thief waited breathless for a reply; and He saw that from that moment until the end of time, the eyes of men and women would be lifted up to the Cross on Calvary and that every word He uttered would be echoed and reëchoed forever. And then He turned and said to you and to me and to all who are really penitent and sorry for having offended Him: "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

O my God, the wondrous mystery of prayer! Shall we ever understand its power and efficacy! There, on either side of Him, were crucified two

men—only once before had our blessed Lord been alone with two men—it was on Tabor's Mount, when He was transfigured before the Apostles, "and behold two men were talking with Him, and they were Moses and Elias, appearing in majesty. And they spoke of the death that He should accomplish in Jerusalem." That day had at last arrived, and Jesus Christ, transfixed upon the Cross between two thieves, looked out over Jerusalem, looked out over the vast world, and saw the lines of division stretching far away from the Mount of Calvary to the uttermost parts of the earth, saw men and women of all classes and kinds, ranging themselves in two immeasurable lines, and those lines began at the foot of the crosses of the thieves. One was true to Him, and the other rejected Him. One prayed for the spirit of Penance, the other reviled Him. One gazed up into the eyes of their dying Master, gazing with all the longing of children losing their father, and begging with voices grieving with sorrow: "Lord Jesus, remember us, remember us, for we are children of the Kingdom Thou art entering now as a conqueror." The other long line of sinners saw only the vileness and ignominy of Calvary, saw only the horrid bruises in His sacred body, and with hearts that rejected the

grace He offered them, they reviled Him, cursed Him, and flung at Him the cruellest taunt of all—"If thou art the Christ, save us. We understand nothing nor want to understand anything of the mystery of penance and contrition. We want no sacrament of penance, we want solely to forget, for there is no sorrow in our hearts." Oh, my God, it is all too terrible, this sight of the dying impenitent thief. He had been sprinkled by the Precious Blood which flows from Thy wounds. He was there so near to his dying Saviour, and yet sin had conquered him so fully that his glazing eyes were filled with hatred for the Lamb of God, so fully that his hands would have struck his Redeemer, were they not fastened to the gibbet.

Again we stand like little children before this awful contrast between good and evil, like little children who grope in the darkness for safety. Justice ruled at Thy right hand, O Christ, Mercy at Thy left. O King of glory, Son of Justice, Lord God of Mercy, gaze down upon us brothers and sisters of the good Thief. Number us not among those whose hearts have been hardened. Look upon us as Thou didst upon him. For we too have been thieves, O God—thieves of a worse sort. Talents of grace and of nature Thou hast

given to us, and like thieves we have stolen them for our own evil ends. They were given to us for our salvation; we have thrown them to the wind in the pursuit of the pleasures of the world. It is we who again and again have robbed Thee of Thy glory, by our pride and vanity. It is we who have bartered like thieves in the night the purity of truth for the lies of the world. It is we who have cast aside the white garment of love Thou hast placed upon our shoulders in Holy Baptism, cast it aside for the wretched bribes of the lowest pleasures in life. How often, O God, might we not have been left to grow hardened and impenitent like the others. Jesus, beloved Master, let this impenitent thief descend from his cross. He has proven himself unworthy to die by the side of Thee. Let me take his vacant cross. Let my hands and feet be crucified in his stead. Let my body burn with the fast approaching flames of death. Let me die close to Thee, O Divine Lamb, let me make amends for all the sins which have driven me farther and farther from Thee. Let me confess before Thee on that cross, confess to all the world, as the good thief did, that Thou art the Son of God, the Lord of the kingdom of heaven, the fountain of mercy who died to save me. I ask not, I dare not ask,

O King of Glory, to possess Paradise to-day, for I am unworthy of it. But I am weary with the struggle, Lord Jesus, and my heart falters as it looks down the lane of the years that may remain, and it trembles with the thought that it may lose Thee. Give me the grace to remain like the poor thief, ever at Thy side. Let me hold fast to the cross Thou hast placed upon me. Tell me, O my God, in those rare moments when my heart has forgotten all else but that it belongs wholly to Thee, tell me that one day I shall be with Thee in Paradise. Tell me that I shall live only for Thee, and that I shall die to all the vanity of this life, and end my course in Thee, reigning in heaven with Thee, for all Eternity.

THIRD WORD

"Woman, behold thy son. . . . Behold thy mother."—John xix. 26–27.

JESUS is to speak for the last time to His Mother. Jesus and Mary, Mary and Jesus, Mother and Son—one heart and one soul; His sorrow her sorrow, His heart her heart. Union ineffable and divine, who will ever penetrate therein! Every wound she sees, every sign and sigh of pain, all the weariness, all the agony, she feels and reproduces in her innermost being. In every inward anguish that racked His soul, in every cruelty of His executioners, in the blasphemies of the mob and the impenitence of the thief, in every thought that springs from the divine heart of her Son to His eyes and lips, she, Mother of the humanity that suffers, Mother of the divinity which wills that suffering, Mother of Christ the anointed, she touches the utmost depths of sorrow, she finds herself falling and sinking into an ocean of bitterness and pain. Ah! call her not Noemi, that is, beautiful; but call her Mara, that is, bitter, for the Almighty hath quite filled her soul with sorrow. The parting was now about

to come, the farewell word to be spoken. Never had she forsaken Him a moment. In His infancy, in His childhood, in His young manhood, in His years of public teaching, in His passion, the heart of Christ knew that His divine Mother was always near. She had passed silently along, throughout the weary march to the Mount of Calvary. At one moment they had met, and a word of tenderest love had passed between them, for an instant their hands touched the Cross together, and then she was thrust back into that mob thirsting for His death by the soldiers who knew not who she was, nor cared. Near by, she was, while they crucified Him; and as her heart stood still, the Cross was raised on high and the agony began. As she gazes upon Him, covered with blood, naked and bruised from head to foot, her soul looks back through the years—the all too short years of their companionship—and she cannot help linking the beginning with the end. In Calvary she sees Bethlehem. In the wood of the Cross, the wood of the manger. In the nakedness of Golgotha, the poverty of the stable. Bethlehem, the morning of their lives together, with all the dewy freshness of the newborn day, visions itself before her, contrasts itself with Calvary and its night, its black night without

a star. And after Bethlehem, she sees Nazareth, Nazareth the silent, Nazareth the mysterious, Nazareth and His childhood, and the long days of waiting, of waiting hand-in-hand for the Almighty Father to speak to His Son and bid Him take the road that leads to Capharnaum, to Jerusalem, and to this. Theirs had been an idyllic life together —a life in which their hearts had sung in unison the glorious magnificat of the Eternal Father.

Together Mary and Jesus had walked those years—years hidden by the clouds of God's own making, and no one can ever hope to penetrate their love and devotion—the Divine Son's for His Mother, Mary's for Him. Vaguely only can we picture their perfect love. Faintly only can we understand the scene at Bethlehem. Never can we approach a full comprehension of the scene on Calvary. Mary's was the heart of a perfect mother; Jesus had the heart of a perfect Son. Their sorrow, as their eyes met on Golgotha, is too sacred for us to realize, for it was as boundless as the love which had knit their souls together in the tenderest union this world has ever witnessed. All through those years at Nazareth, the shadow of the Cross fell upon their home. Each succeeding day brought with it new revelations of love, brought also nearer the day

of atonement for the sins of men. Mary's courage had never once faltered—it was not to falter now at the end. She had followed him from Pilate's house to Calvary. No one knew the mystery of His passion and death as she did. Every aspect of that awful drama was fraught with meaning to her; but her Mother's heart could not still the anguish which threatened to engulf her. The cries she heard about her pierced her soul with unspeakable sorrow. The scenes she was forced to witness in order to remain with Him to the end were harrowing her very soul with a pain no comfort would ever again on this earth banish from her heart. Martyr that she was, she stood erect and valiant at the foot of the Cross, at the foot of that altar of the holocaust, with an invincible constancy, like a rock in the midst of the waves which batter themselves to pieces without crushing it. But above and beyond all this suffering, was a grief which struck deep, like a blow in the dark,—the abandonment of Christ. Was this not her Son, who had cast out devils, who had cured all manner of diseases? Was He not the divine healer, who raised the daughter of Jairus to life, who gave to the dead son of the widow of Naim, a second life, a soul anew? Was this not the Master, the ever-loving Master whom Peter and

James and John had seen transfigured on Tabor in all the glory and freshness of a heavenly dream? Was not this the kind Father who had desired the little ones to come to Him, who had fed at one time five thousand men and women—and yet where were they all? Here and there in the excited crowds on Calvary, Mary could see the frightened face of the woman Jesus cured by His very shadow. There was the blind man who now could see, there the twitching lips and clenched hands of Nicodemus. But where were the hosts of His followers, where were those who wished to make Him king, where were His apostles, His disciples, His friends? Is there no one to come forth courageously from the crowd and profess his belief in the dying Son of God? Is there none but the thief on the cross? Had all the exquisite loveliness of the Sermon on the Mount been wasted like the fragrance of a flower on the desert air? Would no one speak a word of comfort to her Son? Must these blasphemous cries of the high priest and the people go on to the end? Must she stand alone in her sorrow and her grief? Oh, the bitterness of that abandonment! Good Jesus, must she suffer more, must she take upon her at Thy command the motherhood of this race of cowards, this race of sinners to which we all

belong? She has listened to the lying witnesses at His trial. She saw Him cast aside for the robber and murderer Barabbas. She heard the cries and shouts of the multitude before Pilate's house demanding His death, heard the words of doom: "Crucify Him, crucify Him." She watched as only a mother can, as they laid Him upon the Cross, listened to the sharp blows of the hammer driving the nails through those hands and feet she had caressed at Bethlehem, thirty years before; saw the crown of thorns pressed more deeply into the sacred brow she had kissed in the days at Nazareth. She quailed as the sounds of the hammering thrilled through her soul with immeasurable pain. She waited, as the Cross was lifted on high, waited until the end. And when those words were spoken, spoken with all the gentleness of a Son but with the command of a God, the sword of sorrow was plunged deeper into her heart, for Jesus her Lord had given her a new motherhood, a motherhood which embraced the sinners of that day, the sinners from that time until now. Only for an instant did it blind her with its bitterness, and then there lightninged through her soul what God had really done. He had made her forever the co-Redeemer with Christ of the whole human race. This was a

new Bethlehem, a new Nazareth, which extended from pole to pole, where every human heart would find its home and Mary its Mother in God. She should be the refuge of sinners, the help of Christians, the comfort of the afflicted, the health of the sick, the cause of our joy and the gate of heaven. Jesus knew better than the saints and angels how weak and uncertain the human race would be to the end; and after having promised us all through the Penitent Thief Paradise for repentance, after having assured us of pardon for our sins, be they red as scarlet, His love for us must embrace more still. There was only one treasure left. He had given us Himself in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. He had given us His love and forgiveness, and one treasure remained—even that we should have, we poor feeble children, who were being orphaned as He died on the cross, "Son, behold thy Mother." With these words, she, the rarest and fairest, the Divine Mother of God, God's choicest treasure and most wondrous creature, she was given to us for our Mother. "Son, behold thy Mother." And sons and daughters of her are we, sons and daughters of the handmaid of the Lord, who spoke with archangels and angels, and who now reigns as Queen over His heavenly court, sons and

daughters whose highest guarantee of salvation is in resembling her, in her humility, in her purity, in her patience and sorrows.

Blessed Mother of God, never have we deserved such a treasure as thee. But take us tenderly and gently to thy innermost home, thy heart of hearts, wherein we poor banished children of Eve may dwell, and comfort us who are mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Thou art our chief refuge in the trials and temptations with which the evil one assails us. Thou art the conqueror of Satan, and thy presence encourages us in the battle of life. Thy blessed eyes look upon us with a mother's love, as they gazed to-day upon the dying Saviour. Thy blessed hands will guide us, thy blessed arms are around us, protecting and guarding us, and the remembrance of thy heroic courage at the foot of the Cross will strengthen us to go on nobly to the Calvary of our own lives, yielding every ounce of our strength, every drop of our blood, every heart beat, every sigh and tear in reparation for our sins, struggling like our Divine Master up the rocky sides of the Golgothic mountain of life to die in the arms of God, our work accomplished, our sacrifice complete, thy sons and daughters, victims to our love for Jesus Christ the Lord.

FOURTH WORD

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"—Mark xv. 34.

SLOWLY the scene has been changing. From the sixth hour, when He last spoke to Mary His Mother, there was darkness over the whole earth to the ninth hour. The supreme moment in the Crucifixion had come. Hanging on the Cross, Christ was now separated from the world, separated from the inimical crowds around Him. Separated from Mary even, whom He had given to John as his Mother. He was at last alone with His Eternal Father, alone with the God of Justice. Silence now reigns on Golgotha. Dark, dull and heavy, the clouds are obscuring the sun, and a gray pall is settling down on Calvary. There is death in the air. The birds are frightened by the sombre darkness and the awful quiet, and they flee from their nests, leaving Calvary far behind. The people are awe-stricken with the horrors that impend. The whole universe prepares itself for a cataclysm. The trembling, rumbling earth tells of a conflict Nature herself was enduring at this heart-rending spectacle.

For three dark hours Christ is alone with His Eternal Father, alone with the God of Justice. Every bitterness there was, He had tasted. His inward agony increased with every fleeting moment; and over His soul the waters of desolation rushed in torrents. God's infinite hatred for sin burst upon Him, helpless and alone. Mary indeed might pray. The shivering Apostles might now summon up courage to come near to Calvary. John might gaze up at Him with his virginal eyes and shower His wounds with the soothing rain of his love. But at this appalling moment, by God's decree, Jesus was to be alone, alone with the God of Justice. His long agony was now drawing to a close; but down the arches of the years the divine eyes of Jesus travelled, and century after century passed before His sight. In the midst of all His pain, there was the extreme dolour of it all —the weariness of it all, as He sees the millions of redeemed souls who will reject Him and His teaching. It is the mystical body of which He is the head that suffers now. It is for His Spouse, the Church, that the cry of desolation escapes His lips in the darkness of Calvary. All the storms which sin would cause, all the storms which would pass over her in the years to come, wrecking and ruining the work of her hands, passed in that

frightful moment over Him. All the bitter trials she should endure for the sanctity of His doctrine, all the evils the blind Synagogue would inflict upon her before it would lie among the flotsam of time, all the giant efforts of paganism to exterminate His followers, all the scenes in the arenas at Rome, the Christians burning as torches in the gardens of the Emperors, all the heresy and the error of a fanatical world always antagonistic to the Church, all the schism, all the wounds made by the disloyalty of her own children in the bosom of the Church, all the sons and daughters He was dying for, wandering farther and farther away from the faith—all these and more He saw from Calvary. And when the storm of opposition crashed out its hatred for Him on Calvary, His soul was stricken with sorrow unto death; and for one blinding instant the work of His passion and death seemed to have been swept away into oblivion by the angry waters that swirled around the Cross. From depth to depth of unfathomable suffering He sank, until at the close approach of a death which was more awful to Him than it could ever be to any of the sons of men, it seemed as if His divine humanity could endure no more. He attempts to raise His head towards heaven, but the crown of thorns only pierces His brow the

deeper. He tries to join His hands in prayer to God the Father, that this chalice of desolation might pass from Him, but they are nailed to the Cross. He would kneel, but He is fastened to the hard bed of the Cross. His eyes are blinded with blood. His lips are swollen with fever and pain. He seeks for one to comfort Him, one to carry His prayer to God; but even she, Immaculate Queen of Heaven, must remain silent and inactive. Alone with God's justice is He, and justice must be regained. The time for mercy is past and gone. The all-holy God has offered Him up as a holocaust for the sins of mankind. That sacrifice must go on to the bitter end of death. The Sacred Heart of Jesus hesitates not a moment; but the fearful desolation of that loneliness is breaking the last bonds which unite Him to life. He has reached the summit of the mountain of sorrows. He has walked through the anguish and dereliction of the Valley of Death. He is encompassed by enemies. When He gazes down the mountain-sides of the years, gazes out over the whole of this vast world in which we live and move and have our being, when He searches into the inmost recesses of our hearts, what does He see there but abandonment and neglect, what does He feel but the winter's cold and chill? "My

God," He utters, as the words of the Psalm come back to Him. "My God, look upon me. From my mother's womb, thou art my God. Depart not from me, for tribulation is very near, and there is none to help me. Must I tread the wine-press of suffering alone? They have opened their lips against me, as a lion ravening and roaring. I am poured out like water, and all my forces are scattered. They have dug my hands and feet, they have numbered all my bones. My heart is become like melted wax, my strength is crackled and gone up in smoke, my freshness has spent its wavering shower in the dust, and now my heart is as a broken fount wherein tear-drippings stagnate. They have parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture they have cast lots. But Thou, O God, my God, remove not Thy help from me. Let not the tempest of these waters of sorrow drown me, nor the deep affliction of it all swallow me up. Hear me, O God, My God, for Thy mercy is kind; hear me, as I pray dying, as I die praying, for the sins of the world. Look out upon the world according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, and let not Thy justice reign alone, for in Thy sight no man living is justified. Do not forsake me in this final struggle with the powers of evil—do not forsake me, but

yes! do forsake me, leave me, depart from me, let me hang here alone and helpless, alone with the justice of God, alone with Thy face averted from me, let me drink the dregs of the bitterness of desolation, let my humanity shudder and recoil under the excruciating burden of sin, that I may be forced to cry aloud over all Judea,—'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' For only thus, Eternal Father, can I rouse the hearts of men to the hideous reality of sin, only thus can I leave behind me the conscious horribleness of the intolerable pain of loss which sin deserves, only thus can I change their hearts of stone into hearts of love, only thus will those children whom I have bequeathed to Mary be held fast to Thee, held forever by the echoes of my desolate cry in this black night of misery which has descended upon me, held by the sight of the Son's agony being multiplied by their crimes against Thee!"

O good and gentle Jesus, again like little children we stand at the foot of the Cross, striving to penetrate this darkness and desolation our sins have caused. Our hands are in Mary's now, but it is we who have merited to be forsaken. We understand Thy cry now:—My God, my God, remember Thou the cause for which Thou hast

forsaken Jesus, that no other child of Mary may ever be forsaken by Thee. Jesus, teach us the lesson of loyalty, loyalty to the cross, loyalty to the crown of thorns Thou hast placed around every Christian's heart. Many will walk no more with Thee from this day of wrath, this terrible day; many will despise the ignominy of the Cross, but Lord Jesus, to whom else shall we go in the desolations which come over us, if not to Thee. Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have known that Thou art the son of the living God. Crucify us desolate with Thee in Thy desolation, for nothing henceforth shall ever separate us from Thee—neither tribulation, nor distress, nor pain, nor danger, nor death, nor things present nor things to come, shall ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Thee, Christ Jesus the Lord.

FIFTH WORD

"*I thirst.*"—John xix. 28.

THE dark, saddening shadows are rolling away from the face of the crucified Christ. The waters of desolation which swept over His soul, as He felt Himself forsaken by the Father of Mercies and left alone with the God of Justice, now rush away from Him with their work accomplished. The end is drawing near; and God and the world, Jesus and suffering, are about to take leave of each other in this last hour. The fearful torments He has undergone from last night in the Garden of Gethsemane on through those bitter hours to Calvary, the steady loss of almost every drop of His Precious Blood, His inward agony and distress are now burning and consuming His whole frame with a thirst that is staggering. The intensity of His suffering grows now beyond all comprehension. No food has passed His lips nor drink; no sleep has soothed His sorrow; no rest has strengthened Him, since they left the Upper Chamber yesternight to go to the Garden of Olives, where Judas betrayed Him. His strength was gone now beyond all recall. Water He craved

to cool His fevered brow; water to ease those congealing wounds; water to assuage those burning lips; water as a shipwrecked mariner lost upon the lonely wilderness of the sea; water He wanted, water, as the traveller who is sinking down to die upon the merciless sands of the desert; water to quench His thirst; water to alleviate this scorching pain. The burning sun of God's justice glared down upon Him from heaven, drying up the very tears He shed for humanity's sake. But tell us, Blessed Christ, are we to believe that it was bodily thirst alone which consumed Thee and caused those agonizing words, "I thirst"? There across the Valley of Hebron lay Bethlehem to the south of Calvary, lay as David once saw it in his thirst, and broke out in prayer: "O that some man would get me a drink of water out of the cistern that is in Bethlehem, there by the gate." But was it bodily thirst alone, O Christ, like David's which tossed Thy soul in the throes of that living fire on the bed of death? Was it this heart-breaking thirst for water alone which caused Thee this agony? Once before Christ had manifested His thirst—it was at the well of Jacob, in Samaria, at the end of a long dusty day, and a sinful woman had quenched His parched lips. Now at the end

of His life, at the close of his sufferings, He repeats those selfsame words, "I thirst, give me to drink," and Mary, who was standing by, Mary the sinless one, who has fed Him at her breast in Bethlehem, cannot raise a hand to slaken His thirst. No one knows the heart of her Divine Son as she. No one realizes the profound mystery of that desolate cry as she. She knew those words represented something above and beyond their apparent meaning. She knew they were His last words in that conflict with the world which began among the Doctors at Jerusalem twenty years before. Her Mother's heart heard the significance of that cry and responded to it, by remaining perfectly still. The soldiers around her could not understand, and while one of them fastened a sponge to a reed and filled it with vinegar and placed it to His lips, Mary, who alone understood why He tasted it and refused to drink, gazed steadily upon her dying Son and prayed to the Almighty Father to carry Him past this last milestone in a life of agony. Whilst the Blessed Christ lived, He had opposed the world with all its works and pomps. He had condemned its excesses; He had scourged its hypocrisy; He had flayed its failings. The Divine Master never mentioned its name without

betraying those secret emotions which manifest themselves in His burning anathemas. His Sacred Heart is full of divine indignation, it overflows, it breaks, at the mere thought of all the evil in the world. He looks out from Calvary in these last dreadful hours and sees His children and Mary's children wrestling not with visible flesh and blood, but against invisible principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of darkness, against the spirit of wickedness in high places. Concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life encompass them. There are perils and temptations to the right, perils and temptations to the left, on the narrow road that leads to Calvary. Persecutions against His divine Spouse, dangers of wealth and dangers of poverty, heresies of all kinds, moral and intellectual, rationalistic sentiments, superstition and spiritism, Satanism, fanaticism, and indifference, lies, scandals, blasphemies and impurities,—O God! what a world of horrors it is! And in this last hour He hangs upon the Cross to redeem that world. The world knew He was conquering. Satan had been driven back from Calvary's hill into hell, for Christ had won the victory over death and over sin. But the world would part from Him as from an enemy, and the world brought

Him vinegar to drink—the vinegar of bitterness, the vinegar of the souls it would seduce from that day to the end of time. Ah, yes, sweet Jesus, the world has nothing else to offer Thee in Thy thirst but the vinegar of its pleasures, the gall of its cruelty, the hyssop of its indifference, and the wormwood of its sins. But it cannot silence those echoing words, "I thirst." They were heard that day around the world, and every Christian knows now that it was Thy love for sinners, Thy love for their salvation, which caused Thee this parching thirst upon the Cross. It was this thirst—this thirst for the hearts of men, which induced Thee to assume human flesh thirty-three years before. It was this thirsting love for our wretched souls, with all their cowardice and weakness, which made Thee undergo those years of poverty, of misery, and of suffering. How often, O Lord, have we not offered Thee gall and vinegar in place of the love we owe Thee. O God, let a change come into our lives at this dread hour. "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so let my soul pant after Thee. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God, O when shall I come and appear before His face." Blessed and loving Lord, let Thy tears be my bread day and night. I long to quench Thy thirst with this poor broken vessel of a heart.

But there is no water in this barren dry land of my soul. It is arid, O God, as the desert; it is hard as the nether millstone of life; it is cold as the snows in winter; it is blind as the feet of the lame; it is sordid as the money-changers in the temple; it is sinful as the streets of Sodom —create a clean heart of living water in me, O God. Keep me not in suspense, O Divine Lord, and take not vengeance on my past iniquities by hiding Thy thirsting heart from me. Punish me not for the bitter gall and vinegar of my sins, which I have so often put to Thy sacred lips. Thy thirst for my soul alone can heal me. Purify my heart and I shall be wholly Thine and Thou wholly mine, for eternity. Give me to drink of the living waters of Thy love. I long to quench Thy thirst with my whole being. I long for the fountains of eternal life, O God, my heart asks it of Thee, it cries to Thee. May there spring up in my soul a fountain of living water which may flow from my heart till it reach Thee on Calvary, eternal and everlasting God! My longing is ever for Thee. My love seeketh after Thee. Let all else be hateful to me but the blood and water which flow from Thy Sacred Heart—my love from henceforth belongs to Thee, that Thou mayest satisfy the thirst which Thou hast for me

and for my salvation. O water of the joys to come, water of the crosses and tribulations to be suffered in memory of Him, waters of desires that are pure, of acts that are chaste in the sight of God, pour Thy healing stream upon me, that the thirst of my Lord and my God may find its solace in the love I shall cherish from this day forward for Him and for Him alone.

SIXTH WORD

"It is consummated."—John xix. 30.

All is finished. God Himself now speaks through the lips of His divine Son. Jesus the conqueror has tasted the last bitterness of His crucifixion in the vinegar and hyssop; and the ashes of death rest on His brow. When He had tasted the vinegar, in place of the water He craved, He knew then that He had fulfilled in all things the prophecies concerning Himself. Nothing remained now but desolation and death. His soul was ready to take its flight. All was finished. The long journey was over. The pilgrimage in this valley of tears, the banishment in this land of sorrows had ended. In the flower of His manhood He was dying. His sacred head was bowed in agony upon His breast. His eyes, once the haven of all who sorrowed, were dull and glazed with the fast-nearing signs of death. Christ Jesus had now entered upon His final mortal agony. It is God himself who utters these words: "It is consummated." It is the God-Man dying on the Cross, who thus reveals in a lightning flash the consummation of all the prophecies of the

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Old Testament, the consummation of all the figures sung by the Psalmists, all the foreshadowings of Isais, the Messianic gospels of Ezechiel and Jeremias. Abel slain by his brother—he was My precursor, says Christ, for My blood has flowed from every wound and has bathed My body in a baptism of fire. All is finished. Joseph sold by his brothers to the Ishmaelites. Daniel in the den of lions. The scape-goat driven into the wilderness with all the sins of the people upon his forehead. The Lamb without blemish slain in the bondage of Egypt. The lost sceptre of the house of Juda. Jerusalem in the garments of mourning. All is consummated in me. These are shadows out of the past, and Christ had fulfilled them all, and all now is finished. In Thee, O Christ, all is consummated. On the Cross the wintry law and the prophets are dying and in Thee begins the new life of the gospel and the refreshing summer of divine grace and love. All is consummated, and the work of mediation and redemption is perfected. Every sin is now atoned for, for Thou hast blotted out the handwriting of the decree which was written against us. In Thy death all our offences are forgiven. The weary calendar of our sins, the sins of pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth, our sins

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against God, sins of blasphemy, sacrilege, malice, and despair, our sins against our fellowmen, our sins against ourselves, have all been fastened with Thee to the wood of the Cross, and Thy precious blood hath washed out the entire scroll. Thou art the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world. All is consummated, O blessed Christ. From the soles of Thy feet to the crown of Thy head there is no spot within or without Thee, that has not its wound, its bruise, its pain—and all for us. Thou hast conquered over sin and death, conquered over Satan, conquered over the world, conquered over the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life. The work of Thy redemption is finished. Sin is at an end. Iniquity is abolished. Guilt is cancelled and everlasting sanctity brought into the world. Thou canst now depart out of this weary life in the name of God the Father Almighty who sent Thee to redeem us, in the name of the Holy Spirit, whose Vision Beatific has dwelt in Thy bosom since eternity began, in the name of the angels and archangels, the thrones and dominations, the cherubim and seraphim, who adore Thee eternally, in the name of the patriarchs and prophets who foretold Thy coming, in the name of the holy

apostles and evangelists who have described Thy most holy passion and death, in the name of the holy martyrs and confessors and virgins, and in the name of all the saints of God, whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy precious blood. It will grieve our hearts forever thus to lose Thee, but now Thou canst depart, for all is finished, Christ Jesus,—and yet all is but begun. The work of redemption must now be carried on by Thy divine Spouse, the Church, carried on by her in each individual soul of the flock Thou leavest behind, of that flock in which my soul is the unworthiest one. A little while and the angel of release will stand beside Thee to whisper the consummation of Thy sacrifice. Christ Jesus, dying on the Cross, the supreme moment must one day come to us all, that momentous hour when we must appear before Thee,—glorified by Thy victory, to give an account of our stewardship. We know not when or how; but between this hour and the consummation of our lives, teach us the law of sacrifice. Teach us to be meek and humble of heart. Drive pride and anger and hatred from our hearts. Conquer in our soul the spirit of intemperance in word or thought or deed, conquer the rebellion of the flesh against that most pure bond which binds us to Thee. We look forward, blessed Jesus,

to the dawn of that better day, when God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes and death shall be no more, when the night of our exile from Thee shall break into the morning of eternal life, when the lengthening shadows of our banishment shall touch the borders of the realm of celestial light, when we shall reign with Thee in the consummation of the rapture of our union with Thee for all eternity.

All is consummated, all is finished, O Blessed Christ, and yet all is but begun. Thy holy Church, Thy divine Spouse, must follow in the footsteps of her Master from Bethlehem to Nazareth, to Jerusalem, and to the Cross. She must undergo her passion. She must shed her blood daily for the salvation of men. This is that sweet yoke Thou hast placed upon her. We are her children, we are Thine also. The cruel world never understood Thee. It will never understand her. She is nailed to the Cross of Calvary with Thee, for on Calvary was she born, born in the Precious Blood of Thy heart, born in the wounds which disfigure Thee. But Thou hast placed about her the garment of immortality. For her sake Thou hast conquered the gates of hell, lest they prevail against her. For nineteen hundred years she has sung the solemn *Miserere* of her sorrow

for the world she too is trying to save, to save for Thee—render to her the joy of their salvation. Let her little ones, with their innocent eyes that gaze up into Thine, take up Thy hymn of triumph, and carry it in their breasts to Calvary, that Thou mayest render to her in these our days a glorious victory over her enemies, and grant to her the consummation of that love for Thee which she has ever kept pure and sacred from Calvary's day to this. O God, my God, never forsake us, battling here below in the warfare of life. Raise us up to Thee on the Cross, that we may hear these words of blessed rest, these words of the Father to His children who have fought the good fight: "It is consummated, son, be of good heart, for now thou enterest into the joy of the Lord."

SEVENTH WORD

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."—Luke xxiii. 46.

And now the end has come. At the moment the dying Saviour uttered that last cry: "It is consummated," the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. An earthquake split the rocks of the hillsides of Judea, and as it rolled away into the distance, the graves of the dead were opened, and many bodies of the saints that had slept, arose, and coming into Jerusalem appeared to many. Never had any city cowered with the fear Jerusalem experienced in these last moments of Christ's life. Over the heads of the people swept the terrible reality of this crime. The roads leading back to Jerusalem from Calvary were filled with hurrying crowds of men, women, and children. Women wailed and beat their breasts in the consciousness of the awful guilt which had shown itself upon the brow of their nation. Men were withering with fear of the day of doom come at last. It was the beginning of the end of their city, that city which had rejected Him. It was the end of their name among the nations of the earth. It was

the end of the race of the Chosen People. The long agony of Christ was now about to close. It was not the violence of His torments which made Him cry out with a loud voice and give up the ghost. It was His divine will. He died, because He willed to die for the salvation of the world. He yielded up His spirit into the hands of His Eternal Father, because He willed to do so. It was an act of the sublimest liberty, the sublimest heroism, the sublimest humility. It was an act of divine love. All was finished. The old law was abrogated, the gospel of love had begun, the Church was born, grace sprang up like a full-blown flower in the gardens of God, salvation was cast about the naked shoulders of mankind, God's justice was vindicated, hell was conquered, heaven was opened, and man was saved. The dawn of the new day had come to the world that was sodden with the drunkenness of crime. The death knell of evil was sounded, and Christ Jesus the Lord fell into the outstretched hands of his Eternal Father, with His sacrifice complete, with His work perfected, and the everlasting alliance established between His Father and Himself. Christ dies that we may live. Once before in the presence of death, Jesus had cried out with a loud voice. It was at the grave

of Lazarus in Bethany; and when the stone was rolled away, Lazarus came forth restored to life. Christ now rolls away the heavy stone which barred the way to Paradise, and crying out with a loud voice recreates in us a second life of union with God, and of heritage, under the new law, of heaven gained with all its joys. "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." From henceforth the souls I have redeemed by my passion and death will look upon Thee as their Father, a Father who protects and defends, a Father who bestows upon them brotherhood with His divine Son and co-heritage in the kingdom of heaven. Those hands, filled with every blessing, so merciful, so all-powerful to save and to bless, so ready to supply the needs and failings of His children, will never be empty to those who come to Him in confidence and love.

Thus the blessed Christ died on the Cross, died from an overpowering love for us sinners. O Thou good Shepherd and most perfect lover of Thy sheep, the hour of parting has come. Thou didst once declare, that greater love than this no man hath than that a man lay down his life for his friends. And now thou layest down Thy life for me. Let me remain here at the foot of the Cross forever. Let me mourn here the pains

and sufferings, the agony and death, Thou hast undergone for my sins. O Lord most holy, I am truly left an orphan, without any one to comfort me. But go, O blessed Jesus, since thou wilt have it so. Go, my hope, rest Thee from all Thy sad labors, and end Thy long exile from the Eternal Father. Go to give to the good thief the Paradise Thou hast promised him. Go to quench Thy thirst at the eternal fountains of the heavenly court. Go where no one will ever more forsake Thee. Go, Lord, to Thy eternal Father who calleth Thee. Go, glory and beatitude of my soul, go as a conqueror into the realms above. Remember, Lord, the ceaseless sorrow I shall feel from this day forward in Thy absence, the ceaseless desire that shall stir my heart to hear those blessed words: "Son, all is finished." Into Thy hands, O eternal Father, I commend my spirit, my soul, my body with all its powers, my heart with all its weaknesses. I offer up to Thee the wounds the world and sin have made in my hands and feet and in my heart. As a true brother of Jesus, I commend my blindness that Thou mayest enlighten it; my coldness that Thou mayest inflame it; my wayward heart that Thou mayest set it forth again on the right path; all my weaknesses I commend to Thee that Thou mayest

uproot them from my soul. All that I am, all that I ever hope to be, I place in Thy divine hands. Teach me to do all for Thy honor and glory; teach me to do Thy will in all things and to recognize Thy divine providence in all that may befall me. Into Thy hands I commend my spirit now and forever.

Jesus, a year has gone by since we beheld this scene. A year in which we have not always tried our best to love Thee. We have not always been faithful, and the hearts that kneel here to-day are scarred with many wounds of sin and shame; but our presence here again must mean to Thy Sacred Heart that the prodigal in us has returned for good. Blessed Lord, we are afraid to say all that we feel in the midst of the realities of Calvary. Our lips are too weak to open the flood-gates of our hearts; but there is so much to commend into Thy hands as Thou leavest us for the throne of God. Take with Thee, O Lord, the anguish we have undergone all these years from the treason and faithlessness of friends; from their weaknesses, their neglect, their disloyalty, their ingratitude. Take with Thee all the suffering we have felt in watching Thee suffer during these three hours of agony. Take all the pains of our fears; take all the inmost secrets of our hearts and present them all to the eternal

Father, that He may purify them and purify us. Good Jesus, this may be the moment set aside from the beginning of all time for our salvation. Thou wert set for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel. So must it be to the consummation of the world. Every man must pass by Calvary once, and make his choice between those who crucify Thee and the Saviour who is dying for his sins, between the impenitent thief at Thy left hand, upbraiding Thee for his suffering, and the good thief at Thy right hand, begging Thee to remember him this day in the kingdom of heaven. Our choice is made, O blessed Christ, in this moment of Thy consummation and death. We are standing at the end of Thy life now, as holy Simeon did at the beginning, and with him we pray to the eternal Father: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, according to Thy word in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples—a light to the revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel." Into Thy hands, O Lord Jesus, we commend our homes and our families, our most secret desires and our longings, hoping to be united with Thee one day, in the presence of the Almighty Father, of Mary, Thy Mother, of the angels and saints of God. Amen.

CLOSING DISCOURSE

"We suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him." —Rom. viii. 17.

We have been suffering with Him these three hours, as the great Apostle St. Paul tells us, that we may all be one day glorified with Him. No one ever knew Our Divine Lord better, no one apart from His blessed Mother ever loved Christ more than St. Paul the Apostle. From the moment that the light of God struck him down on the road to Damascus, until his own death thirty years afterwards at Rome, one burning thought, and one alone, dominated his whole being and life —an ardent love for the adorable Person of Jesus Christ. With an energy of will which was extraordinary, even in those days of giant minds and giant souls, and in spite of numerous infirmities of his body, he succeeded in accomplishing more for the crucified Master than all the other Apostles. From Jerusalem to Greece, from Athens to Rome, from Rome to far-away Spain and return, this indefatigable laborer in the vineyard of God travelled back and forth preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Thirty years of a per-

petual martyrdom, in shipwrecks and in perils, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, thirty years of sufferings, like the thirty hidden years of his blessed Lord, spent for one cause and one alone—to tell the children of all the generations to come that their only happiness in this world is in the contemplation of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, upon the Cross. The Cross is the one theme of all his teachings. It is the one love of his great heart. It is the silver thread which runs through all his Epistles. He is in very truth the Apostle of the Crucifixion. He saw in prophetic vision how we all should be gathered together this sorrowing day around the Cross of the Crucified Saviour, and his fine grand soul knew that all over the world the priests of God would be describing these scenes to their children, scenes destined to bring home to their hearts the lessons of the death of Christ upon the Cross, in order that they too like him might say:—"With Christ we are nailed to the cross, and all our glory and all our joy here below is in the cross of Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to us and we to the world." That one message from his writings sums up the whole of the agonizing tragedy we have been witnessing again this afternoon.

This day, above all the days in the year, ought to be passed in silence. If any voice be heard, it should be the voice of sobbing, of weeping and of wailing, for we have lost Him whom our souls loveth. The cold dark tomb is enveloping Him, and with Him are being buried all our joys in possessing Him, all our happiness in being His children. A short forty hours from now and our hearts will be aglow with the glory and the peace of the Resurrection morn; but now sorrow broods over the world and over us, and the voice of gladness is hushed in the land. But even in our anguish we cannot be silent. This is not a time to take refuge in any thought which will draw a veil over that Cross. There Christ the Lord God of Heaven is hanging, and the sublime meaning of that death the Church is solemnizing to-day is too clear for any heart not to be touched and not to understand. We are joined to-day with Him in the strongest bonds of sorrow. We are standing together with Mary and John on the Hill of Calvary. There is darkness all around us, save the light of heaven shining from that dead face. There is no time now for reasoning. The most awful act in the drama of humanity has taken place, and it is not now that the mind can look and see and understand; it is the heart which

must feel and sense and know in its better and higher way the scene which has been enacted before us. Thousands of times during the year that has gone have we looked upon our crucifix; thousands of times have we seen the priests of God raise their anointed hands in the blessing of the cross; thousands of times has that sign been made over the children of the Church in the holy tribunal of penance washing away their sins by virtue of the crucifixion of Christ; and thousands of times have the priests signed them with the very Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in giving them Holy Communion. All this has had its value and its meaning. All this has prepared us for the lessons we have been drawing this Good Friday afternoon, as the Cross with its crucified Body reigns supreme over the whole world. Gone now are the vestments of gold and silver. Gone now the Blessed Sacrament from its silken throne in the Tabernacle. Hidden now the jewelled Monstrance and Ciborium. Silent the joyous songs and hymns of the Church. Darkness rules the world, as it did on the first Good Friday night. All else is still save the broken hearts of Christ's faithful ones, who have been kneeling here together in spirit listening to Him speak to them again as He once spoke to them on Calvary's hill.

Sorrow reigns everywhere, ah, yes—and yet in the very midst of that sorrow, from the summit of Calvary itself, the greatest lesson the blessed Christ teaches us is the lesson of love. It is as though He would have us forget the awfulness of His sufferings, of His fall upon the ground, of the terrible nailing to the cross, and those three hours of agony, and would have us remember in this most dreadful moment of His life, that even then one thought brooded in His Divine Heart—love for us.

All during these three hours of pain His broken crucified heart has been thinking of us, pouring out upon our souls the fruits of His redemption, and blessing our lives with those imperishable gifts of love, of forgiveness, and of Mary our Queen and Mother. The cruel nails and the crown of thorns and the hard wood of the cross have done their brutal work, and having accomplished His Father's will in all things, Jesus dies. Jesus is dead—the angels are whispering, and for a moment the world hangs breathless in anguish. Jesus is dead—the words ring like a battle cry into the courts of heaven and the universe is shaken to its uttermost depths by His triumph. Jesus is dead—and God the Father, for whom this sacrifice was made, knows the consummation of

Calvary, and the rocks are rent and the graves are opened, the sky is darkened, thunder roars and lightnings blaze, and Jerusalem shivers with fright, while the horror-stricken people rush to their homes to hide from the all-seeing Eye of Him who alone realizes what His divine Son has done for the world. Ay, Jesus is dead and justice has been satisfied, mercy has been let down like a flood upon the earth; but not to you, O Tyre and Sidon, not to you, O Bethsaida, if your God has died in vain for you. And not to you who listen again this Good Friday, if the lesson of God's great love for you is lost and forgotten with to-morrow's rising sun.

Can any heart hesitate to love Jesus wholly and entirely after all this suffering? Can any heart in the presence of this awful scene on Calvary's hill still harbor any lingering affection for sin or the occasion of sin, while Mary, his divinely-given Mother, stands by God's command at his door, knocking for entrance, in order to make that heart a more loyal son or a more loyal daughter of Jesus the crucified? Can any heart in the vivid realization of that Great Pardon God has given us for our offences against Him, leave this house of sorrow with ill-will or hatred against his neighbor? The crucified Saviour has been shower-

ing our souls with the best and holiest of His gifts, and gratitude and love demand that those hearts be swept and garnished now in the darkness of Calvary in order that peace and brotherly affection reign there as king.

Above the world from Calvary's hill the Cross stands as a solitary lighthouse for the wandering souls of men. That Cross is our legacy, the sign of our salvation, the pledge of our ransom.

O beauteous and glorious Cross, more resplendent and wonderful with the Blood of the Divine Lamb than if encrusted with the richest and most splendid jewels, thou wert the end of His exile, the beginning of His eternal reign, the ladder of His entrance into glory. Thou alone in this world of riches art my heritage, for upon thee He died, poor and naked of all things, clinging only to the cruel nails and to thee. He left thee wholly to His followers—to each one of us who loves Him. I adore thee, O wood of the Cross, on which my Saviour died. I embrace thee—I receive thee this day as my most precious treasure; more beautiful art thou than all the stars of heaven—stronger art thou than all the powers of the world. Thou art my crown, my glory, my pearl of great price, on thee I wish to live—on thee I wish to die.

Oh, if we but realized Calvary's sacrifice; if

we but realized Christ's love for us, sin would disappear from our hearts, hatred would fade from our bosoms, and love for our fellowmen be the spring of all our actions. Calvary was necessary for our salvation. Calvary's unspeakable pain, Calvary's crucifixion and death were necessary to teach us how immense God's love for us has been all through the ages and how unfailing it will be till the end of time. Calvary's sorrow was necessary to teach us that the whole aim of our lives here below is love—love for Jesus crucified and love for our fellowmen, as St. Paul loved, with the consciousness that if we are valiant, if we sorrow bravely with him, God's own day will come when our souls will rise in their resurrection to be glorified with Him for eternity.

We are the sons and daughters of the Lord God who has just died for us, and heirs to the Kingdom He has won for us; and as sons and daughters of God, our Father in Heaven would not have us to be slaves in the bondage of sin during this sacred year which is just beginning this Good Friday night for us; and slaves in bondage we never shall be, if we but partake of the constant stream of graces which are being poured out of the gates of the Kingdom of God upon a world that is parched and dried up with iniquity,

but from which the harvest of souls His angels and priests are reaping is just as great to-day as it ever has been in the past. There will be going up to the throne of God's justice in the Kingdom beyond the clouds every hour of this year until next Good Friday, from one end of the world to the the other, the great Petition of Love, the self-same sacrifice in which He is the High Priest and Victim as He was on Calvary. There will be countless souls consecrating themselves in love to Him in the iron-bound anguish of a life of penance. All over the world the lovers of the Cross of Christ will be trodden under foot more than ever; but it is not ours to hesitate in the conquest for the glory of His holy Cross. We are not to stop in the midst of the battle here below to question the plan or the policy of our leaders. We are not to lay down our cross in despair, because the Lord God of Hosts has not spelled out to us, as fathers spell to their little ones, the scene of that victorious triumph, when the Cross of the Blessed Christ will be seen in the heavens again, and when every sin, every insult and outrage, every blasphemy and crime committed against Him and His Holy Name will be avenged in letters of divine fire across the gates of hell that have never prevailed

against Him. And if, as we are struggling day by day against His enemies and against the enemies that throng outside the citadel of this holy temple in our breasts He has won for Himself by his crucifixion, if we cannot help feeling across our own shoulders the lashing whips of scorn and calumnies and lies, those who hate the Church wield upon the Sacred Body of His Spouse,—as that black horrible yesternight in the dungeons of Jerusalem their ancestors wielded upon Him, if we cannot help growing faint now and then under the heavy crosses every Catholic heart must carry, and carry with a gallant loyalty to the holy and ineffable name of Our Divine Leader, the remembrance of the glories that await us in the Kingdom of God will strengthen our hearts with buoyant confidence in the victory the Cross of the Son of God will gain one day, before the last great *Amen* has been sung by the hosts of His Heavenly home.

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